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(1) In Anglo-Saxon, had the meaning "from," "away from" (as the strengthened form "off" has still), and was not used for genitive or possessive relations, these being expressed by special case-forms. In the Norman period, however, "of" was taken to represent the French *de* (a use well developed by the time of Chaucer), and in the Elizabethan period both senses of "of" were in common use. But after about 1600 the later force of the word became predominant, and in the earlier sense (which is now practically obsolete) it was replaced by other prepositions. In consequence the King James Version (and in some cases the Revised Version (British and American)) contains many uses of "of" that are no longer familiar — most of them, to be sure, causing no difficulty, but there still being a few responsible for real obscurities.

(2) Of the uses where "of" signifies "from," the most common obscure passages are those where "of" follows a verb of hearing. In modern English "hear of" signifies "to gain information about," as it does frequently in the King James Version (#Mr 7:25; Ro 10:14, etc.). But more commonly this use of "of" in the King James Version denotes the source from which the information is derived. So #Joh 15:15, "all things that I have heard of my Father"; #Ac 10:22, "to hear words of thee"; 28:22, "We desire to hear of thee"; compare #1Th 2:13; 2Ti 1:13; 2:2, etc. (similarly #Mt 11:29, "and learn of me"; compare #Joh 6:45). All of these are ambiguous and in modern English give a wrong meaning, so that in most cases (but not #Mt 11:29 or #Ac 28:22) the Revised Version (British and American) substitutes "from." A different example of the same use of "of" is #2Co 5:1, "a building of God" (the Revised Version (British and American) "from"). So #Mr 9:21, "of a child," means "from childhood" ("from a child," the Revised Version (British and American), is dubious English). A still more obscure passage is #Mt 23:25, "full of extortion and excess." "Full of" elsewhere in the King James Version (and even in the immediate context, #Mt 23:27,28) refers to the contents, but here the "of" represents the Greek *ek*, "out of," and denotes the source — "The contents of your cup and platter have been purchased from the gains of extortion and excess." the Revised Version (British and American) again substitutes "from," with rather awkward results, but the Greek itself is unduly compressed. In #Mr 11:8, one of the changes made after the King James Version was printed has relieved an obscurity, for where the edition of 1611 read "cut down branches of the trees," the modern editions have "off" (the Revised Version (British and American) "from"). For clear examples of this use of "of," without the obscurities, compare Judith 2:21, "they went forth of Nineveh"; 2 Macc 4:34, "forth of the sanctuary"; and, especially, #Mt 21:25, "The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?" Here "from" and "of" represent exactly the same Greek preposition, and the change in English is arbitrary (the Revised Version (British and American) writes "from" in both cases).

(3) In a weakened sense this use of "of" as "from" was employed rather loosely to connect an act with its source or motive. Such uses are generally clear enough, but the English today seems sometimes rather curious: #Mt 18:13, "rejoiceth more of that sheep" (the Revised Version (British and American) "over"); #Ps 99:8, "vengeance of their inventions" (so the King James Version); #1Co 7:4, "hath not power of her own body" (the Revised Version (British and American) "over"), etc.

(4) A very common use of "of" in the King James Version is to designate the agent — a use complicated by the fact that "by" is also employed for the same purpose and the two interchanged freely. So in #Lu 9:7, "all that was done by him ... it was said of some ...," the two words are used side by side for the same Greek preposition (the Revised Version (British and American) replaces "of" by "by," but follows a different text in the first part of the verse). Again, most of the examples are clear enough, but there are some obscurities. So in #Mt 19:12, "which were made eunuchs of men," the "of men" is at first sight possessive (the Revised Version (British and American) "by men"). Similarly, 2 Esdras 16:30, "There are left some clusters of them that diligently seek through the vineyard" (the Revised Version (British and American) "by them"). So #1Co 14:24, "He is convinced of all he is judged of all," is quite misleading (the Revised Version (British and American) "by all" in both cases). #Php 3:12, the King James Version "I am apprehended of Christ Jesus," seems almost meaningless (the Revised Version (British and American) "by").

(5) In some cases the usage of the older English is not sufficient to explain "of" in the King James Version. So #Mt 18:23, "take account of his servants," is a very poor rendition of "make a reckoning with his servants" (so the Revised Version (British and American)). In #Ac 27:5, the "sea of Cilicia" may have been felt to be the "sea which is off Cilicia" (compare the Revised Version (British and American)), but there are no other instances of this use. In #2Co 2:12, "A door was opened unto me of the Lord" should be "in the Lord" (so the Revised Version (British and American)). #2Sa 21:4, "We will have no silver nor gold of Saul, nor of his house," is very loose, and the Revised Version (British and American) rewrites the verse entirely. In all these cases, the King James Version seems to have looked solely for smooth English, without caring much for exactness. In #1Pe 1:11, however, "sufferings of Christ" probably yields a correct sense for a difficult phrase in the Greek (so the Revised Version (British and American), with "unto" in the margin), but a paraphrase is needed to give the precise meaning. And, finally, in #Heb 11:18, the Greek itself is ambiguous and there is no way of deciding whether the preposition employed (pros) means "to" (so the Revised Version (British and American)) or "of" (so the King James Version, the Revised Version margin; compare #Heb 1:7, where "of" is necessary).

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